

Hampden Commission on the Status of Women

Dawn Forbes DiStefano
Michelle Goncalves
Jacqueline Griswold

Patricia Hallberg
Jennifer Metsch
Ellen Moorhouse

Nicole Murray
Arlene Rodriguez
Shanique Spalding

ANNUAL REPORT

June 2017

Members:

Dawn Forbes DiStefano—West Springfield
Michelle Goncalves—Ludlow
Jacqueline Griswold—East Longmeadow
Patricia Hallbert—Wilbraham
Jennifer Metsch—Longmeadow
Ellen Moorhouse—Springfield
Nicole Murray—Agawam
Arlene Rodriguez—Springfield
Shanique Spaulding—Springfield

Elected Officers:

Nicole Murray—Chair
Shanique Spaulding—Vice Chair
Jacqueline Griswold—Secretary

Purpose:

On April 25, 2017, the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women inaugurated nine new commissioners to a newly formed regional commission created to study and report on the status of women and girls in the twenty-three towns/cities that make up Hampden County, Western Massachusetts. “The Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women is a state-established body charged with reviewing the status of women in Massachusetts and offering recommendations regarding policy that would improve access to opportunities and equality.” Taking from the brief provided, the Regional Commissions: “Modeled after the MCSW, the...unfunded county and regional women’s commissions were legislatively created to study and report on the status of women and girls in their geographical areas, and to provide permanent and effective voices for women and girls. Each county and regional commission reports their findings annually to MCSW.”

Membership:

The entire commission was sworn in at the end of April, and our first meeting was held on May 11, 2017. We had our second meeting on June 15, 2017. Over the two meetings, we have nominated and elected officers, established our calendar, and went over future events to begin getting to work. We have

begun to set up task groups to target certain aspects: social media, legislative, program planning. We have also begun the process of figuring out how to incorporate such groups into break-out sessions during our meetings. We have discussed reaching out to other more established commissions as to what they found most helpful at the beginning.

Accomplishments:

Already we have had members of our group attend various events:

****5th Annual Statewide Gathering on the Status of Girls in Massachusetts** in Sturbridge on May 12, 2017 was attended by Shanique Spaulding, Patricia Hallberg, Arlene Rodriguez and Ellen Moorhouse. This gathering focused on the first five years of working to improve the status of girls and specifically targeted engaging women's commissions, engaging men, engaging the next generation of leaders and how to do this in today's environment. There was also discussion on the Study conducted by the Girl Scouts and Simmons College on how girl's groups assist with increasing confidence in girls.

****Advocacy Day**, State House, Boston on May 17, 2017 was attended by Nicole Murray and Jennifer Metsch. Advocacy Day targeted specific priority legislation impacting women and girls in Massachusetts. I was able to speak briefly about the group and our excitement over embarking on this new journey with everyone. I also spoke on the legislation the Commission asked for us to speak on, Senator Harriette Chandler's and Representative Sarah Peake's act protecting girls from female genital mutilation. Along with other present Commissioners, I was able to meet with the aides of local legislators regarding all the priority legislation.

****Open Meeting Law Workshop**, Holyoke on May 30, 2017 was attended by Nicole Murray, Jennifer Metsch, Patricia Hallberg. This in depth workshop went over such topics as the purpose of the Open Meeting Law, to what qualifies as deliberation, meeting notices, when Executive Sessions can be utilized, minutes, meeting records and the complaint process. As a newly formed commission, this was very useful information for our commission to get off to a good start.

Conclusions:

As we have only had two meetings together, we have known each other for less than two months. Over these two meetings we have found that there is a great deal we want to get started on. First and foremost we need to get the basics down regarding the setup of our organization. Our July meeting is going to primarily focus on establishing our bylaws and committees/task forces. We have been provided with the hearing notes from the hearing held in Hampden County prior to the creation of our commission. This information will provide us with a jumping off point as to where we want to focus moving forward. We also will be setting up time with other more established commissions (at least the officers of other commissions) for valuable insight.

We come from various towns and cities within Hampden County and have different types of professional experiences. These differences will be very beneficial to us in our mission of reaching as many women and girls as possible.

Goals for 2017-2018:

**Set up our bylaws and meet with other more seasoned commissions regarding what they felt helped them get up and running, and learn more about their successes and what improvements they wish to make.

**Reach out to other Women and Girls organizations.

**Begin holding public hearings.

**Get information about our new Commission out to Hampden County.

Submitted by:

Nicole Murray, Chair of the Hampden County Commission on the Status of Women